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ABSTRACT

This journal issue, published by Texas high school students, features interviews with two Army veterans of World War II, Jack Harris who fought the Japanese in the Pacific, and Farris Ivie who fought the Germans in Europe. The publication recounts the war experiences of the two Texas natives in their own words through a series of one-on-one interviews. Farris Ivie was a student at Texas A&M when he was drafted and Jack Harris was only 16 when he enlisted in the United States military. (BT)

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Loblolly Heroes: Jack Harris & Farris Ivie
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Edited by Cassie Downing and Fiona McGarity

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Winter
2000

Loblolly HEROES

Jack Harris
&
Farris Ivie

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The Loblolly

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Farris Ivie

Farris Ivie is an East Texas native and a graduate of Wells High School. Then he was off to Texas A&M University where he graduated in 1940. Suddenly, his world changed for him and millions of others when the United States entered World War II. In early 1943 as a young lieutenant, he found himself in the jungles of the South Pacific fighting the Japanese Army. With little relief, this experience stretched out to the summer of 1945. By then Farris Ivie was a captain in command of an infantry company in the Philippines. One is reminded of Tom Hanks in the film "Saving Private Ryan," but Mr. Ivie survived to a long and fruitful life in East Texas.

Farris Ivie provided us with this digest of his regiment he was a part of throughout World War II.

History of the 158th Regimental Combat Team "The Bushmasters"

The 158th Infantry Regiment was born Sep-

tember 2, 1865, as the First Arizona Volunteer Infantry. The Regiment was drafted into Federal Service for World War I, 5 August 1917, as part of the 40th Division. Reorganization after the first World War assigned the 158th Infantry to the 45th Division.

On the 16th of September 1940, The Declaration of the National Emergency, the 158th Infantry joined its parent organization, the 45th Division at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. They trained for five months, moving to camp Barkley at Abilene, Texas, February 28, 1941.

Following December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, the 158th Infantry Regiment was removed from the 45th division, becoming a separate Regiment. January 1942 found the Regiment embarking at the Port of New Orleans and disembarking in the Canal Zone.

It was in Panama where they trained in jungle-fighting skills. The Regiment took the name of the Bushmasters after the deadly bushmaster snake, which became the distinguishing shoulder patch of the fighting 158th Regimental Combat Team. The name of Bushmasters became well-known through the Nation's press.

General MacArthur, himself, personally selected and requested that the Bushmasters be sent to his command in the Southwest Pacific Theater. They were on their way to Australia by

THE 2ND OF JANUARY 1943, LANDING TWO WEEKS LATER AT BRISBANE, QUEENSLAND.

WHEN GENERAL WALTER KRUEGER'S HEADQUARTERS MOVED TO MILNE BAY AND ON TO GOODENOUGH ISLAND, THE 2ND BATTALION, 158TH INFANTRY BECAME THE SECURITY FORCE FOR HIS HEADQUARTERS.

ON CHRISTMAS DAY 1943 SAFFORD'S COMPANY G EMBARKED FOR ARAWE. IT WAS THERE THAT THE 158TH INFANTRY HAD ITS 'BAPTISM OF FIRE.' A SHORT TIME LATER THE REMAINDER OF THE 2ND BATTALION ARRIVED UNDER COMMAND OF LTC FREDERICK R. STOFFT OF TUCSON, ARIZONA.

THE LANDING ON WAKDE-SARMI IN DUTCH NEW GUINEA, WHERE FROM 17 MAY TO 12 JUNE 1944, THEY FOUND THE JAPANESE 6TH TIGER MARINE DIVISION. THE REGIMENT TRADED 77 OFFICERS AND MEN FOR 3000 OF THE ENEMY. THEY WERE RELIEVED ON 12 JUNE BY THE 6TH INFANTRY DIVISION (WHICH SPOKE WELL FOR THE REGIMENT, AS IT TOOK AN ENTIRE DIVISION TO REPLACE THEM).

WITH ONLY A BRIEF REST, ON THE MORNING OF 2 JULY, THE REGIMENT WENT ASHORE AT NOEMFOOR WITH THE MISSION TO DESTROY THE ENEMY AND CONSTRUCT AN AIRSTRIP THAT WOULD HANDLE B-29 BOMBERS. FIFTEEN DAYS LATER, THE MISSION WAS ACCOMPLISHED AND GENERAL MACARTHUR LANDED ON THE NEWLY CONSTRUCTED B-29 AIRDROME.

THE BATTLE AT LINGAYEN GULF WHERE THE

Japanese invaded the Philippines 3 years earlier. Here, Company G from Safford, Arizona was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for their action in capturing the 14-inch coast gun which was bringing heavy fire on the invasion force. By the end of the operation on 27 January, 100 Japanese field pieces had been captured or destroyed. General MacArthur "had returned."

April 1st, Easter Sunday 1945, the 158th Infantry invaded the Bicol Peninsula in southern Luzon. The Regiment hit the Legaspi Port in a magnificent assault landing with Naval landing craft.

After being relieved by divisions in campaign across the Pacific, the 158th Infantry was selected to spearhead the final invasion of Japan. The Bushmasters were under orders to proceed two days ahead of America's crushing D-Day, to silence Japanese air warning stations south of Kyushu.

Timely capitulation of Japan saved the 158th Infantry from what many believed would have been a certain suicide mission. On October 13, 1945, the 158th Infantry landed in Yokohama, Japan. The great odyssey was over. FROM ARIZONA TO JAPAN - IN FIVE YEARS! Members were then shipped home, and the 158th Infantry was deactivated at Utsunomiya, Japan on January 17, 1946.

Farris Ivie's Story

I was born at Forest, Texas, which is a little community in Cherokee County, in December of 1917, and I finished grade school at Forest School. There wasn't a high school there. There were very few in the first few grades. I went to Wells to finish out my schooling, and I graduated from Wells High School in 1936 as valadictorian. There was a history teacher who corrected some of my grades when they got to the office. He straightened it out, and I was very happy. It was a small country school, so I didn't have any background in science or anything like that. I took some agricultural courses in place of science and biology.

My folks and my agricultural teacher, Louis B. Taylor, decided that I was going to go to Texas A & M. We always called my agricultural teacher "Bull" because his middle name started with a "B". He was from over around Center. A lot of our teachers were from that area, around Nacogdoches and Douglass. The superintendent was from Douglass, and his wife was from Nacogdoches. He wasn't only the superintendent, but he was also the basketball coach. We didn't have many sports over there except

basketball. When I was there, we always had a good basketball team. I never really thought about going to college. My two older brothers were on the farm. They went to high school. They also got married real quick. They married sisters.

My parents and my Ag teacher decided I was going to A&M. I didn't even know what A&M meant or where it was. I had only been out of the county a few times. I had been to Tyler a couple of times, but that was close to home. In 1936 I did go to Dallas to the World Fair. A bunch of us Ag boys went up there as a group.

I just thought I'd go to work somewhere, but they took me and I enrolled in Texas A&M. Being from the country, I didn't know what to do, didn't know anybody, and didn't know where to go. So I just found me a room and set my stuff down and went to register. When I got down there, they asked me where I wanted to stay. I told them that I'd just got myself a room up in Hart Hall. So they assigned me to it. It happened to be in the dormitory for the Infantry. Of course, the R.O.T.C. covered all the branches of the army. I didn't even begin to think far ahead, for that was 1936, and you didn't see all of this handwriting on the wall then that

war was coming. When I went down to register I remembered that Mr. Heaton was the register at A&M at the time. I wasn't sure if he was kin to all the Heaton's down in Gary. I never really got to know him that well. The President of the College at the time was T. O. Walton. He was raised at Clayton. In fact, there is a Walton Cemetery at Clayton. He was good, but he was strict. I remember that first year there were some people who were dissatisfied, and they were going to protest. All of us were out there watching when he came out on the balcony and blew a loud horn. He told them they had ten minutes to get back to the rooms or they were on their way home. That broke the protest. That's what it takes, is someone to be strict on young people.

I had a hard time. I was trying to play basketball because I thought I was a really good player in high school. But when I started playing with those guys, I realized that I shouldn't be playing. On December 1, they called me into the Deans Office and told me they were going to send me home because my grades were too bad. Being myself, I said," Being the Valedictorian of my class, that was a big let down." So I talked to the Dean and asked him to give me another chance to get my grades up to passing by mid-term. He agreed to that, so I started

working harder on my studies. I spent a lot more time on my work, and I did improve my grades by barely passing at mid-term. I found out what they really wanted. I was taking some classes that I didn't have to. One of the requirements was Freshmen Chemistry. In order to graduate from A&M, you had to have it. I passed it, gritting my teeth together. There was one old boy in that same class and his name was I.J. Irving. He was from out of Horton, Texas. In his senior year he still had not passed it and he had to go to another college to pass freshman chemistry. Last time I heard from him, he was county judge down there. I've had lots of friends.

Of course I'd thought that I'd get a job and everything would be alright. I already had a reserve commission as a second lieutenant. I went to Camp Bullis right outside of San Antonio. I graduated from there, but hadn't had any prospect of a job. One Saturday at A & M, I had some time off, and they were giving civil service exams close to the building I was staying in. So I just went in there and took it to see how I would do. It was easy, and I knew I had passed it. I got a letter from Washington, DC, saying I could come up there and work in the Commerce Department. I went up there and helped do all the records. I was doing the work on the cen-

sus, and all the other guys were just putting the cards in the slots. I was in Washington when Pearl Harbor was attacked December 7, 1941. I had been up there pestering the people where I worked about the draft that had just started. They wanted to know my draft number, but I told them I wasn't crazy; I didn't register for the draft.

LT. FARRIS IVIE JUST BEFORE HE LEFT FOR THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC

On February 2, 1942, I received orders to report to Camp Wheeler in Georgia, and I reported there, and it was a training station. New recruits came in, and they would train them and ship them out where they needed replacements. I was proud to be there and not fighting. Then I got an order to report to New Orleans, LA. I didn't know what was going to happen. Then they told me that I was going to be shipped to Germany or Europe or somewhere over there. That was going to be cold, so I needed a big overcoat and good warm clothes. I was sent with 158 other men to New Orleans.

That's when I ran into two boys. One was from West Virginia and the other was from Wisconsin. We got on a boat in New Orleans together. J.B. Whitten was my bestfriend and my running buddy while we were in the service. We both ended up in the "G" Company of the 158th Infantry Regiment. Later, he got promoted up to S-2, information officer. But he was still right there, handy every time I turned around. We always went to town together. For almost a year we were in Panama training for jungle fighting and learning how to clear out places. Our emblem that they put on our shoulder was a machete with a snake wrapped around it. They told us that the bushmaster was the largest and most poisonous snake anywhere in the Americas. So we had to look out for them in Panama.

The 158th Infantry Regiment was sent to the South Pacific. It was a regimental combat team. It stayed that way all during the war. It

was like we were attached to one division, but most of the fighting was on our own. We had our own artillery and medical outfits. We had transportation, trucks and things to move us. Of course we were a separate unit all the way through. When we got on the ship, we didn't know where we were going. We landed at Brisbane, Australia. They sent us up in the hills about 20 or 30 miles out in the country. I never saw so many mosquitos in my life. You could rake them off any place on your body by the handfuls.

We weren't there but about a month, and the Japs were getting close to Australia. We went to Port Moresby in southern New Guinea in the first part of 1943. We stayed there for awhile and got settled, and then we moved north without any resistance. We went to a little island called Goodenough Island. They thought that there might be Japs there. So we had to go over there to clear it out to protect the other people on the main shore. We didn't have any hard fighting there. It didn't take any time there.

We went on further up, just a short way from New Britain Island. The 112th Calvary was over in New Britain and having a heck of a fight over there. They called for reinforcements and our 2nd Battalion went. One day they put us on PT Boats and carried us up there for a short

while. We camped there where we waited until the next morning because we got there late. The Japs called on us that night because we got an airraid. That's when a boy from Fort Worth got both of his legs blown off. I picked him up and carried him to a hospital. About two weeks later he was told that he didn't have any legs, and he asked the doctors about his sex life. The doctor told him that was alright. He later came to Carthage one day to see me. He went back and ran for state legislature, and they had to build a ramp so he could get into the legislature. He didn't stay too long. I think he got killed chasing some other man's wife.

The fight in New Britain was a hard one. It was the first time I was reported dead. They had more than we had. So we had to pull back. I got a shot just right over my head. I could hear it pop. I just fell down and stayed there for about two hours because I knew that a sniper had me in his sight, and if I moved he was going to get me. So later on, I eased back out of there. When I came out, old Whitten was down there waiting for me. He grabbed me and hugged me and started crying because he thought I was dead. I told him it was just a false alarm.

We couldn't break through the Japanese lines. Colonel Stoff, the commanding officer,

had been General Kruger's aide at one time. He called back to General Kruger. He was next in command to him. He called to see if he could get some tanks up there, so we could get some help. All he could promise was two. The next morning we looked out and all we could see were five Marine tanks. Such help was unheard of then. We had a bad fight and lost two of those Marine tanks. People thought they should cross that river there. It was a river that had so many crocodiles in it that you could probably walk across the river on them.

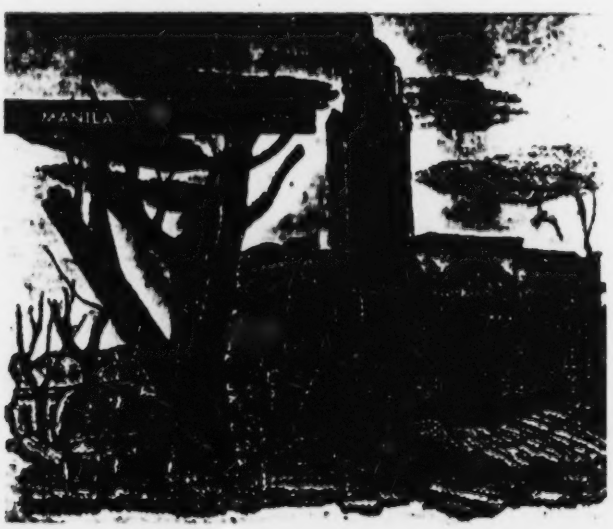
One friend from that time came to visit me twice in Carthage. He is from Indiana, and he was the platoon sergeant. He took his platoon above the rocks to where he wasn't supposed to have gone. We busted him back to private, and three months later, he was promoted by a battlefield promotion to second lieutenant which was very unusual. He was a fighter. He would grab two Japs and pop their heads together and kill them. Two of his brothers were killed in the war, so they sent him a note and told him to go home and not go back because he was the only surviving son. The rule was if you had two sons and one died, then the other had to go home. He stayed in the States till the rest of the war was over.

We fought there and then went to Wadke

and Sarmi. Sarmi was on the mainland of New Guinea. That's where we ran into our really bad fighting. We stayed there for twenty-five days and nights without changing our socks. The Japs got so close, from here to that door (6 feet). A Japanese officer got so close to us that when the man with me shot him, his sword fell in the hole with us. He got the officer's sword, and gave it to me and told me I could have it, and I was still hanging onto the sword but I had no use for it. Somebody stole it out of my bag on the way home. It was one of those fancy swords with the pearls on the handle of it. We finally got relief there that pulled us out of a bind, and they got another division to come in there and clean it up. We found out that there was a Japanese army of 55,000 instead of 5,000; that's what we were fighting during that 25 days.

They were going to bury a lot of the Japs killed there. I told them to get a bulldozer up there and dig a hole. So they did, and he put piano wire on them and dragged them to the hole and pushed them in. A couple of boys went out there and said, " Let us show you how to do that." They would get a pick axe and stick it in their stomach and drag them over.

I pulled out of there and went to Noemfoor Island. On the way up there, we heard Tokyo Rose. She was propaganda voice for the Japanese. She said, "The 158th Infantry, (The Bloody Butchers Of The South Pacific) were on their way to Noemfoor Island. They will land at eight o'clock, on July 2nd." I think we landed about five miles up the beach from where we were supposed to be. There was a



strong coral reef there. There were amphibious vehicles called "alligators" and "ducks" that would just run us up to the fighting. We went in behind the Japs. They were facing the water when we just came up and mopped them up something awful. We lost 170 men and killed over 3000 Japs. It was a massacre. We took the island so the B-29's could take off and go to Tokyo and then come back. They wouldn't have to be refueled in the air. That way they could make a round trip to Japan. They wanted to bomb Japan while we were in the Philippines, when we got enough air force to do it.

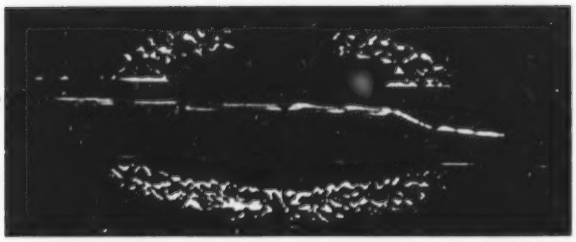
From Noemfoor, we went in to the Philippines. We landed there just two days after the initial landing. The big bunch went in two days before we did, and we went in there and went north in the Philippines to try to clear out the Japs that way. That was our part. We were attached to the 42nd division and we went up there and that's when we got into the bad fighting. We captured some really big guns and got a Presidential citation for it. It was a mountainous area and we were to take the ridges. One was "Red Ridge," then "Blue Ridge," and the other was called "the Amber Ridge." We asked the general why they called it the Amber Ridge. He said, "Well, I read a book called Forever Amber, and it was the dirtiest book I've ever

read." He said, "That was the dirtiest ridge I had ever seen."

I saw something in the Philippines that I hope I never see again. A bunch of our men volunteered to go after a camp where American prisoners were being held by the Japs going back to 1942. The Japs had made the prisoners walk all the way to where they were up north on Luzon from Bataan, and would not give them anything to eat on the way. It has been called "the Bataan Death March."

A friend of mine from Houston volunteered to go up there. All they gave him was a knife, not any guns or any other weapons. They snuck up behind the guards and wrapped a wire around their throat real quick so he couldn't holler, or used their knife. They got one after another and got the guards out of the way and got all the men out. You couldn't help but cry. They were in such bad shape. I don't think anybody could treat people like that. Of course that was one of the hardest things. I mean they put them down. That was against any rule.

It was rough. I was wounded, nothing major anyway. I didn't get any decorations. I could have gotten a Bronze Star, but I didn't. The only real decoration that I am proud of is the Combat Infantry Badge. I 've got it on in that picture, and that is the only one I am proud



THE COMBAT INFANTRY BADGE

of. That's the only one that amounted to me. I was bad shape, I had that Tropical Malaria. I was pretty well shook up. Of course I wasn't myself when I came out of there. I am lucky. Well, the Good Lord has been good to me and brought me through alive.

In the Philippines we saw a lot of war. We went into a place called Batangas. There was a Catholic Church there. We went there, and I saw where one time those Japanese had rounded up all the people from the town. They were collected at the Catholic Church and just went in there. The Japs blocked them in where they couldn't get out. They murdered every-one of them in that church. The Filipinos were bad against those Japs. The Japs, they hated them, because they mistreated them every-which-a-way in the world. They were mean to them.

I remember one time, we were in combat, and I looked and saw about half a dozen Japs running across the field. They ran into a build-ing down there. I said to the men," Well, that

thing is full of them. Let's see what we can do with them." We put enough fire in there so that there wasn't any of them left. When we went in there, there was also a woman and a little child in that building too. Of course, we didn't know that until we went in there to see what it was. That hurt me as much as anything. Of course, war is hell. There was one big general who said, "War is hell." And it was hell!

We were in that fighting for a good long while, two or three months, I guess. They then decided that the fighting had quieted down enough so that they could pull us out. We were still losing men all this time and it was pitiful. At this time they had run out of company commanders. I had been in Company G all this time. After they ran out of company commanders, they asked me to take Company F. I said," I'll take F Company if you'll put that other bar on my shoulder." I'd had just that one silver bar as a first lieutenant. I said, "I want that second bar which is a captain." They said, "Well, we'll OK it, we'll do it." So I took over F Company. The F Company was originally an all Indian company. A lot of them had gone and a lot of replacements had come in and it was just mingled. They were fighters; I guarantee they were fighters.

We were still in the Batangas area. We

were trying to clean them out down there, and we said, "Oh well, I guess the war is over with." But that wasn't true yet. They pulled us out, loaded us on a ship, boats rather, those little old landing boats. They took us south to the end of Luzon. On April 1, 1945, we landed at Legaspi on the southern tip of Luzon.

That was the first time since I'd been over there for all time that my folks knew where I was. They had a friend in Houston where they were living at the time. They'd moved from the farm to Houston during the war. My dad was taking care of Jefferson's Stadium where the Oilers used to play football. The University of Houston was close by. We had some friends who were listening to the radio one night about midnight. The news announcer said, "Captain Farris Ivie had led his troops ashore at Legaspi on southern Luzon, and moved north to wipe out the Japanese that were there." They called my folks and told them where I was.

My kid brother was shipped out to the Philippines at the end of the war. He was in an area further north in the Luzon. We passed each other, but we never did even know where either one of us was until we got back home.

We fought the Japanese in southern Luzon until the war was over. Back when we were there in the jungles, we were guarding General

MacArthur's camp. This was earlier in the war. The general walked out on his porch and he saw me. He said, "Come on over here lieutenant, I want to talk to you." So I went over there and introduced myself as Farris Ivie of Company G of the 158th Infantry Regiment. Well, we shook hands and he said, "Well, I think you are doing a wonderful job." He also said, "We are going to take the Philippines back." That was back when we were in New Guinea. That was the only time I saw him in my life. Then when we were fighting there on the Luzon it was rough. We even captured a stationary gun whose barrel must have had a 12 inch diameter. Its shell sounded like a freight train going through the air. They just got up and left the thing, and we captured it. They were moving away from all our fire power. We had a hard time there.

In fact, we were pretty much under fire every day. One day I looked up and I saw something that was going on which was unusual. I looked and there was General MacArthur. He called me over and I went over and saluted him. He said, "I want to see Lieutenant Peterson." Lt. Peterson was one of my officers at that time. So I sent a runner over there to go tell Lieutenant Peterson to report as General MacArthur wanted to see him. He wondered what he had done and made tracks to report. General

MacArthur got out of his jeep and saluted the lieutenant and said, "I came here for one purpose and that's to pin a Silver Star an you. That's for blowing up that depot with all that ammunition and such up there in northern Luzon." What really amazed me from this event was that General MacArthur remembered my name from a single meeting before and addressed me as, "Captain Ivie."

One day in the jungle I was talking to a friend and I heard a "POP." I looked over there and he was grabbing his hand, the webbing on his right hand by his thumb. It had a hole straight through it as a bullet had hit it. He was just looking at it , and I hit him in the back of the knees and knocked him to the ground. When I did - "BOOM"- I heard another shot go right where we had been standing. The sniper had us in his sights, and we were having a hard time. However, we got out of that tight scrap and got him to an aid station.

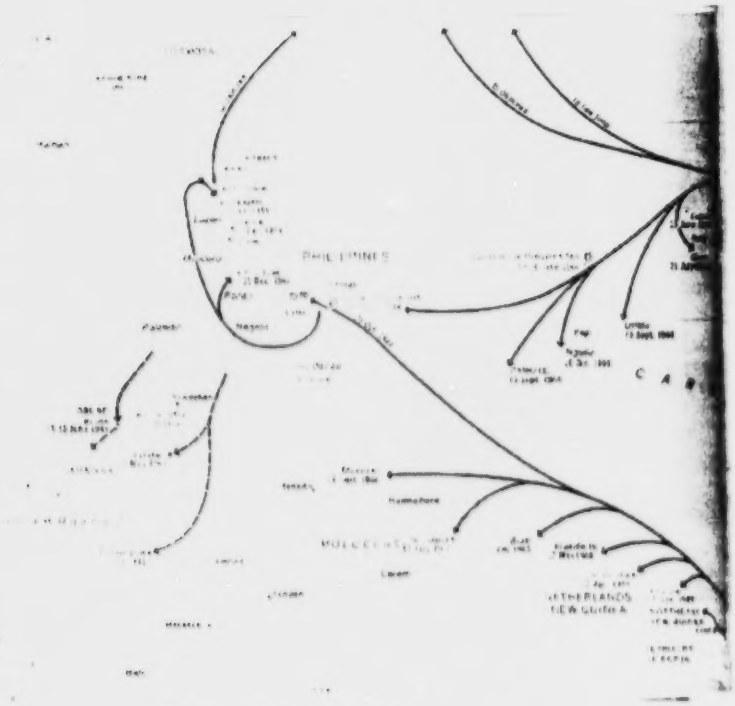
Another time I looked over there on another ridge, and I saw three pill boxes made out of coconut logs. They were fortified positions which had an opening to shoot out at us with a variety of weapons across that ridge. One of my men was the best with the mortar I ever saw. I can't even remember his name now. He was on the 81mm mortar which had just over a three

inch diameter shell.

Well I called him up to me, and I said, "Sergeant, you see those boxes over there? See what you can do with them." He set that dang mortar up and dropped one round and missed the pill boxes by a little bit. Next shot he got one right on top of that pill box. He said, "I don't see anything happening." Well, I said, "Try a delayed action fuse round." We had them in mortar shells that penetrated something first and then exploded. The others were supposed to explode on contact. When it hit those coconut logs, they exploded on the outside. He put that delayed action shell out, and it went down through that coconut log. When it went off, you couldn't see anything but arms, legs, and coconut trees going up in the air.

There were three of the pill boxes. I said, "Get every one of them." He got all three of them, and said, "What now, Cap?" I replied, "Just leave the mortar where it is for now." He said, "What do you mean? We got them all." I again told him to leave the mortar set up where it was. Then it was getting late in the afternoon.

The next morning, the Japanese had built the pill boxes back up exactly as they were before. .I told him, "Do it again." He laughed and said, "You're smarter than anybody I ever knew. You knew they were going to build those pill boxes again, didn't you?" That's the way



FARRIS IVIE'S WARPATH.

the Japs were. They were sneaky. They thought we wouldn't believe they'd rebuild in the same place. But he got them all again on the second time around.

The war was over with while we were still fighting in the southern Luzon. I had one patrol out, and broke through the Japanese line and was mopping up there. Another patrol was out and didn't find out about the war being over because of a broken radio. But shortly the news reached us on the atom bomb and the Japs sur-

rendered.

We sat and waited to see what would happen next. We said, "Well since the war is over, we can go home now on a good boat or plane."

We stayed put though and were sent a new regimental commander. He wanted us to go on to Japan as he was fresh overseas and hadn't been through all of the fighting. So he would not send any of us home until we got to Japan, where we went after the war was over.

We also got a new battalion commander, and he was out there doing close order drill and all that. One day I walked out there. He jumped all over my men because they weren't doing what they were supposed to do as to drilling. I spoke up and said, "Wait a minute colonel. You don't jump on my men like that." He said, "What do you mean?" I replied, "This is the Army, don't you know it? If you have got anything to say to my men, you come through me. You have a chain of command you follow in the Army. You don't start at the bottom and work up. You start at the top and come down." He threatened me with a court martial. I told him, "Go ahead." When he realized what he was doing, he backed off, then apologized. My men heard all of this. They would have died for me before, but they would have really died after that. They had all witnessed how I had taken up for them.

We didn't get sent home, but went to Japan as part of the occupation force there after the war. We didn't know it at the time, but if

the war had continued, orders had been cut for the 158th Infantry to take an island right in Tokyo Bay. We were supposed to protect the troops from the main landing force that was supposed to go in at Tokyo when they invaded Japan. One of the news articles at the time said it would probably have been a suicide mission because of the military strength the Japs still had. Of course we didn't have to do that. They dropped the atomic bombs on them, and they surrendered.

We did become part of the occupation force at war's end. We landed at Yokohama and went through Tokyo. Right now, I believe Tokyo is the second largest city in the world and modern as can be. However, when we went through, there wasn't anything there but crumpled brick and tin. Those B-29's had blown the city apart. Man, they had laid that place low. I mean they had really torn that city up.

We went on to a little town called Utsunomiya up there about 90 miles north of Tokyo. That's where we were going to be stationed. I went out for a walk one day and met and talked to an old Jap. He was a good, friendly man who spoke good English. I asked him how things were going for him. He replied, "Well, you did a job on us and we have no hard feelings. We can't afford to because you have

treated us well. You see this town here? We had a raid by those B-29's. There's a railroad track right down through the middle of town. On the right hand side of that track was an industrial center. On the left hand side was where the people lived. On a cloudy night we could hear the B-29's but couldn't see them. We don't know how they did it, but they bombed out the industrial area on one side of the track, but didn't damage the residential section on the other side with their bombs, on the side where the people lived. That's amazing they could do that, and we appreciated it. They could have murdered all of us at the same time, but they didn't do it."

We had only been there a few days when General Eichelberger, who was one of the bigshots at the time, came to visit where we were camped. He started talking to some of the men, and asked them how many points they had. Points were given for service time, combat time, etc.

Of course, if you had 120 points you were supposed to be sent home regardless. I had 120 points myself. I didn't have any wounds or anything like that. I was the only infantry officer rifle company commander who hadn't been killed or wounded that started out with the 158th Regiment when it first went into com-

FARRIS IVIE AT HOME IN RETIREMENT.

bat. They had lots of replacements, but I was the only original one left. After checking with some of the men, General Eichelberger hurried to talk with our commanding officer, Colonel Sandlin. He put his finger in his face and said , "Colonel, I'll give you 24 hours for every man in this outfit with 110 points or more to be on their way home."

I wish they had waited a couple of days so I could have gotten a ride home by an airplane. However, they put us on a Liberty Ship, a cargo type ship. It was a slow and rough trip. We went by a northern route and landed in Tacoma, Washington. I stayed there several days and then received orders to go by train to San Antonio. When I arrived, I had a physical before getting out, and discovered my tempera-

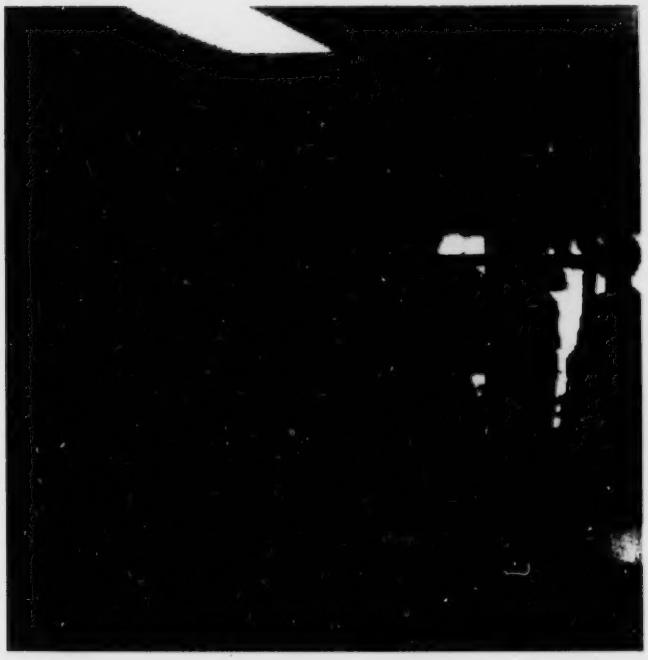
ture was at 105 degrees. I had that tropical malaria, so they put me in the hospital there before I could get home. Of course I was in pretty bad shape. I was six feet tall at that time. That tropical malaria had really got me down.

One time the malaria was so bad that I passed out. It was when I was about to shave. When I woke up, they had me in a big vat of water filled with ice. My temperature was 108 degrees. I blacked out in the hospital, but I told them I'd rather stay in my quarters and take my medicine. They let me take it easy until I got temperature right.

I then got my discharge from the Army. My folks came down from Houston. My brothers drove them there, and also brought my future wife with them. We got to see each other and then they went on back. I got better and moved to Houston to be with my folks. That was in December of 1945.

We got married in January 1946. I then got a job with the Department of Agriculture in Houston. We inspected fruit coming in from the Valley. They then decided they were going to send me out in the fields. I went to Hemphill, Texas to inspect potatoes, and then went to Panola County to do the same thing. I moved on to Arkansas and then on to the Macon, Georgia area. The next year my wife's mother was sick here, and my wife wanted to care for her.

So that seemed like the time to quit work for the government and all the travel it involved. Carthage seemed like a good place to live and we've been here ever since.



Fay and Farris Ivie at Loblolly's
25th Birthday Party

JACK HARRIS

We first heard of Jack Harris from our friend Susan Metcalf Calomino, now living in Chicago but a native of Beckville, Texas. She is involved in a history of Beckville book with her mother and sister and shared his name with us.

We found Jack Harris to be a fascinating individual. In 1943 at the age of 16, in the midst of world war II he joined the army. He quickly found himself in training in England as a member of an elite combat group-"The Night Raiders." From there he went to France on D-Day on June 6, 1944. The following months were exciting and dramatic as Jack Harris experienced combat against the Germans at close quarters. He was recommended for the Medal of Honor two times, but the award never came to him. However, he ended up the war as a highly decorated combat veteran who had survived against incredible odds.

Following world war II, Jack Harris returned home to Beckville to a much different life. Since 1956 he has been the pastor of the Pine Grove Assembly Church. He and his wife ,Bobbie, married 52 years ,are the parents of five children, and have a bonus of 14 grandchildren. It's been

QUITE A LIFE.

I was born at Beckville, Texas. I was born about three miles from town west of Beckville. I went to school in Beckville when I was growing up. Except for World War II, I have lived here. I'm still here with my wife. We have five children and 14 grandchildren.

When I was 16 (my birth record said 17). I joined the army in 1943. I volunteered for a special unit which involved being a paratrooper, and you had to be six feet tall. When we got the chance to volunteer, they tried to talk us out of it, telling us how rough it would be. It turned out they were right.

I went directly to England and did all my training there. It started when I went into the army, and they took me to Camp Walters. When I got off the bus, they were having a meeting. These folks had come in there and were looking for some big men. They said it would be an elite battalion. They said this was the quickest way to get into the war. That's what I came for, so I volunteered. You had to be at least six feet tall and not over six feet and four inches. You had to weigh between two and a half and three pounds per inch. That's a big man.

I was a big old boy, so I volunteered. They sent us right to England. Most of them that volunteered had already been trained and came

JACK HARRRIS

there from all over the United States. So I was one of the first volunteers. They tried to talk us out of it, but I figured that's what I came for was to get with it.

When they pulled us together to make this special unit, we were all just about from everywhere. They just told us to fall in out there. The company commander, he was an Army man, as was the first sergeant. They were the only Army there were. The rest of us were just recruits. The company commander walked up to me and said, "Soldier, you look like a platoon sergeant." I replied, "Well, whatever you say, sir." He then told me, "Fall out over here." Then he went through and picked out others like that.

He made me a platoon sergeant right on the spot, and I hadn't been in the Army for two weeks. My rank was staff sergeant. The Table of Organization (T.O.) called for that rank for that job. Then a month later the T.O. was

changed and called for a technical sergeant and I moved up again. Then the first sergeant retired. The company commander chose me to replace the first sergeant. Hey, I'd been in the Army for about three months now, and I'm the first sergeant. That's the way it was there, but it doesn't work that way normally. Others were quickly made corporals. It was kind of a reward for being on a tough road in the special Night Raiders unit.

We went directly to England and trained there for 13 months. It was really rigid training. We learned a little of the German language so we would be able to communicate better. During that 13 months I made three trips into occupied France. They were called "secret missions," and they were to a great extent. We just went in there to make contact with some French Resistance people. They were sympathetic to us. Later during the liberation of France we would thus know how to make contact with them.

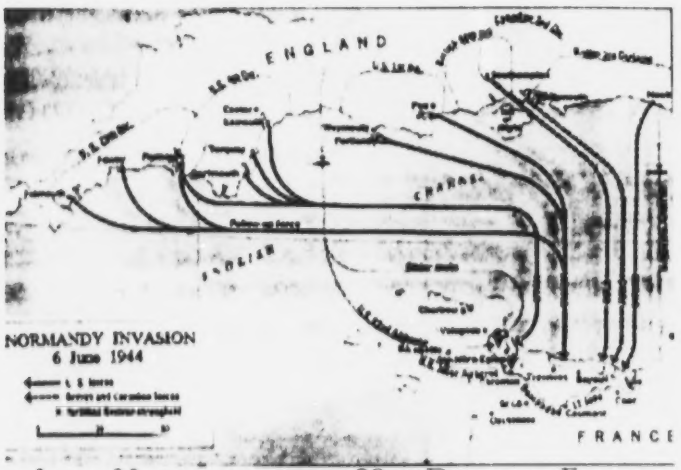
Only one of these three was a combat mission to France. The mission was to just go in there and hit a unit. We knew where it was, and we just hit them hard and got out quickly. "Harass them," was the title, and we did that. Then we continued to train, and part of that was out in the English Channel. We knew we'd be

by boat, but maybe by air. We trained to do it either way.

Jack Harris

I was in one of these maneuvers and on a ship out there in the channel. We ran into some German E-boats and lost 800 men. The Army denied it ever happened until about four years ago. There were rumors floating around. The Army threatened us with everything you could threaten a man with if we sat and talked about it among ourselves. What they did, they covered that up like they do so much now, but it was kind of new then, I think.

They knew that the invasion was imminent, so they just kept them on the roster until D-Day. Then they took about two thirds of them out that day like they'd been killed during the invasion of France. A week later they phased out a few more until they wrote off the whole 800. About four years ago, the government admitted they lost these men to German E-Boats.



JACH HARRIS - WITH THE 29TH DIVISION - FROM ENGLAND TO OMAHA BEACH ON D-DAY. HIS 116TH REGIMENT SUFFERED THE GREATEST LOSSES

We were out there on those boats and didn't have any kind of live ammunition. We were just out there playing soldier, and the Germans weren't playing. They were there with submarines and live ammunition. They tore us up. Fortunately for me, I was not right where the attack came. I was on the outer edge and got away along with some lucky others.

We continued to train until just before D-Day. There is a picture of me in the English Channel on a Landing Craft Infantry boat on D-Day. The front end of the boat has ramps which let down and is supposed to run you up on the beach. You just walk down the ramp on to the beach. However, the Germans were de-

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fending the beach, so we couldn't run up near to the beach. The boats let you off way out in the water, and then you had to wade to the beach. When you waded to the beach, and if you got there, you knew most of the other guys had gotten killed at Omaha Beach. That's where we landed on D-Day.

I think we made a lot of mistakes. Nothing was right. Everything was wrong. It was just our time to win. We were as unorganized as you could even imagine. One thing was our packs. The stuff we carried got in your way. They had equipment all up top in the pack like bandoliers of ammunition. You also had a belt around your waist which stayed on with the pack harness over it. The belt had a cylinder in there. If you jumped out in the water over your head, you squeezed the belt buckle, and it punched the cylinder and inflated your belt like it was a life preserver.

The problem here was we were top heavy. Once you inflated that belt, your head went down and feet went up with all that equipment. You couldn't get out of it and you were going to drown. I saw hundreds of them floating out across there in the water with their feet up. Well, of course, I saw what was happening right away, so I didn't inflate mine. Had I not known that, I would have inflated mine, but I didn't. So

that's what saved me there.

I was with this man who was portrayed on the movie, "Saving Private Ryan" and also on the other D-Day picture, "The Longest Day." They sent me a tape of the first one before they released it and wanted my comments on it. That man I was with in the war there claims to be the first soldier wounded on D-Day. His name is Slaughter. He's still alive and does a lot of veterans work. He was a personal friend of mine. Somebody asked me, "Was old Jim really the first one?" I said, "Well, no one can actually dispute it or confirm it." I mean the Germans were blasting away at us coming and going. He got shot alright before he got to the sea wall beyond the beach. The shooting was going on like gang busters, and they were killing men by the dozens. So with all that confusion, nobody can know. So if he wants to make that claim, it's alright with me.

I didn't get a scratch there. I was with the 29th Division, but I was with the Night Raiders. We were a special unit attached to the 29th. We were similar to the Rangers but we were better trained. We were the best trained unit in the whole United States Army according to General Omar Bradley. It was Bradley's idea to create the Night Raiders.

We had a special job on D-Day. That was

to take out the German's big guns covering the beach. We were successful in that objective even though we suffered very high casualties. We did inflict even higher casualties on the enemy. When you come up on the beach from the water, you know the tide is coming in. So when you come up out of the water on the beach, there's a wall, Oh, maybe, a hundred yards away. It's about three feet high. It makes a good cover from the machine guns, and if you could get to the wall, you could relax for a few minutes. Getting to the wall was the main thing.

General Eisenhower came in the next day, and he said he was astounded to look down on the beach as far and as wide as you could see it. He said there wasn't any place to put your feet without stepping on a dead man. When the tide went out, it took some of them back to sea. If you got wounded that day, it could be just as bad because there wasn't anyway to get out. If you got wounded where you couldn't move, well, there were bullets still coming, so you're just going to get killed. That's why the ratio there that day was of six or seven wounded, one lived. Normally it should have been about three to one recovery from wounds. It is better than that in modern wars because they swoop in with helicopters and get them out.

Now, let's go back to D-Day. I got off the

beach and when I had time I had to do a headcount for my unit. We had come in with 220 men. I was First Sergeant, the first headcount I made was 39 men. This was just a little before dark on D-Day. We got in about a mile inland, and the rest of them were on the beach. I think they said we had about an 82% casualty ratio. I talked to General Bradley about it, and he asked me how I was coming along. I replied I was doing pretty well or alright. He then told me he was afraid I'd be a little depressed, which I really was with that high casualty rate. But the general then tried to cheer me up by saying they had expected a 95% casualty rate for my unit. It was still a sad day to have lost so many friends. They had been the only people I had gotten to really know in the military. We had trained together for 13 months, both day and night. We didn't have any holidays. We knew each other like brothers, and it was hard to lose them like that.

After that they sent us replacements. We'd lose most of them the same day we got them, or the next day. They weren't trained nearly as well as we were to be members of an elite unit that would face Hitler's fanatics in SS units. On one occasion the Germans were going to air drop some SS troops. Our intelligence found out where and when this was to happen. They

then got us in ahead of them without others knowing we were there. That gave us a great advantage.

The officer who created the mission talked to us about it. He told us that these SS troopers thought it a great honor to get killed. They would just purposely run at you and get killed. So, if a fellow is willing to kill himself, then he's dangerous. The officer asked me, "What are you going to do , Sarg?" I said, "Well, I'm gonna get out there, and if you get me out there, then I'm gonna make as many of them happy as I can." Sure enough, they didn't know we were there waiting on the ground. They came in, and we tore them up. It wasn't a contest, it was a massacre. That's all there was to it. They never did get set to fight as they landed under fire.

I've had that happen to me too. One of the times I got shot, that's what happened to me. We were in Germany at that time just after the Battle of the Bulge. I had just left that battle and was going on this other mission when it happened. I just hit the ground from my jump after leaving the plane. I knew I was in trouble before I hit the ground because I saw them shooting at us coming down. So I unbuckled everything and got ready so I could get it all off as quick as I landed. I did that but hit the ground within a few feet to a German machine gun. He

was dug in the middle of the street with a net thrown over it for camouflage. I didn't see it until he started shooting.

I had a Thompson submachine gun on a strap. I got it ready to use on the group. I was headed toward that machine gun nest but didn't know he was there. He was watching me all the time, and what he was waiting for was I had about five men about half a block back of me. He saw them too, and he hoped I wouldn't run over him before they caught up to me so he could shoot us all. But he saw that I was just gonna keep coming. He fired, and the first shot hit my arm and busted it as well as hitting the Thompson submachine gun. I had a funny sensation. So I looked around me and saw the gun shooting up the street. The bullets sped out for it was a German MG 42. I had a 45 pistol, and by this time I got it out and ready to go. By now I'd seen him, so I headed for the machine gun with my pistol in hand firing as I went. Fortunately for me, I hit the gunner, I guess, with the first shot. Instead of knocking him backwards, he fell over the gun. That was lucky for me, for that gesture fixed it where the other four men couldn't get to the gun. I kept coming and shooting.

I just dived into the hole when I got there, but I had been shot in the arms and both legs. I

was hurt really badly, and the other men hollered at me. Well, actually about this time the German shot me. One man behind me yelled, "Look out, Harris." I thought there must be a sniper coming out between me and them. So I was in the process of whirling in his direction, and that's when they hit my submachine gun. So when I got in the hole there, they hollered and called me, and I answered them. They said, "You're hit aren't you?" I replied, "Yeah." They asked, "Where are you hit?" I told them, " I don't know, I'm kind of hit all over." They said,
"We're going to come up and get you." And they did.

They came up and got me alright. They got me out of the hole, and there were six of us now around the hole. The Germans decided to make a break for it. A couple of them ran and got away from the machine gun nest. They ran around the corner. They decided that, hey, there wasn't but one guy around there that was harassing us, let's go back. They came back and when they came around the corner, they shot into us again. They hit all these other men and knocked them all down. Now, we're all down and they just kept coming. They were on the attack now coming through that little town. They thought we were all dead, so they just bypassed us to meet another larger group.

Then everything got quiet. I said, " Any of you men alive?" Well, yeah, we took a roll call and all of them were alive but wounded. One was hit really badly. So I said, "Well, can any of you navigate?" One guy said, "I can get around alright." I replied, "See if you can find us a place where we can take cover." He found a cellar right under the building there. We were right in front of it.

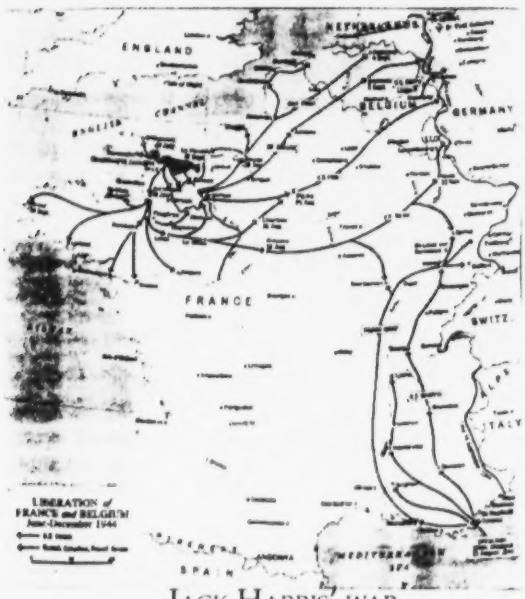
I asked, "Can you get us down in there?" He did. I think maybe one or two of them was already dead by the time we got them down in there. Two more of them died, and then this other man and myself were the only ones left alive. He had been hit several times, but he didn't have any broken bones. They were just flesh wounds.

One morning came, and we had been in that cellar three days and nights. I heard some rifles firing. The other man wasn't as experienced in combat as I was. He had come in as a replacement, but he was a good man. I asked, "You hear that rifle fire?" He replied, "Yes." I said, "Well, those aren't German rifles." He asked if I thought they were Americans. I said, "No, I think it's English, but that's just as good. Go outside, and if you get a chance, go get their attention and they'll help us." He did, and they did. They got us out of there.

They took me off and put me in an English hospital in Birmingham, England. I stayed there almost a year. That was the end of the war for me. It was practically the end of the war for all of us. After the Battle of the Bulge, the Germans didn't have a mind to fight anymore. It was just a matter of waiting for the big shots to get together and negotiate some surrender terms.

I had fought in France, Belgium, Luxemburg, Holland, and Germany. I went all across western Europe. I was with the 29th Division, with this special unit, the Night Raiders they called us. I was the First Sergeant of my company. That job was to be responsible for the men, and keep the records on and see that was done. He's the top man. Well, of course, you've got your company commander, but he leaves it up to the First Sergeant. He lets you take care for everything including combat.

My highest combat decoration was the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC). We were in France. I wiped out a German command post of nine by myself. I also recieved their Croix de Guerre which is their highest medal. In England I was given their Military Order of Merit medal. It's also a high decoration equivalent to our Silver Star. To get this medal, you have to



JACK HARRIS' WAR

put your life on the line, and it has to be under fire. You especially on the line for some cause. I was awarded three Silver Star decorations from the U.S. Army. I won the first one in France just after the D-Day invasion. Then I got one for action near *Brest*, France, and the last one in Germany. I also received three U.S. Army Bronze Stars which ranks just below the Silver Star. And I received three Purple Heart medals for wounds in action. I was also given a "Battle Field Commission" to the rank of First Lieutenant which is a recognition for leadership. This was just before D-Day. The company commander was killed, and we only had four second lieutenants as officers in the company. They had just arrived and hadn't really been trained right. So General Bradley asked me if I'd lead the company. I said, "Well, hey, General, I had every intention of doing so." You know I was saying that as a joke. He made

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me a First Lieutenant and the company commander. However, I got wounded on July 12, 1944. When I got back to the hospital, I resigned my commission and went back to being First Sergeant. I liked the job better, and the pay was better for me, too.

I made five combat jumps on paratrooper assignments. I got wounded on the last one in Germany. We did not land where we were supposed to. What happened was when we were on our way to the jump zone on a C-47 transport plane. We called them "flying box cars." They held 47 paratroopers with all their gear. We were on our way when we ran into some anti-aircraft or ack-ack fire. A shell gave the plane a direct hit which went right through the cockpit. So we didn't have a choice but to get off and jump. We didn't know where we were. We were short of the target. We just needed to get off that plane. That was when I got shot. The second time I was wounded was with the SS troops and the machine gun nest. The third time was, I think, July 12 at St. Lo in France.

The Army just sent our special unit, the Night Raiders, where it was hot. That's what they trained us for, and that's what they used us for. We fought all the way through like crazy. You'd go for days without sleeping or eating.

Once, I went 42 days without changing socks, without pulling my shirt off. After 42 days they could probably smell you before they could see you.

The only chance of getting that grime off was when we had to cross a stream and took advantage of that. We had to scrounge for the food we ate. When we went into combat, we had about a three day supply for food. Forty-two days later it got thin. That was part of our training, survival. We survived because of our training. We were known as the Night Raiders. We were, I believe, a battalion attached to the 29th Infantry Division. We fought on the ground and on the water, anywhere. We were trained to do any or all of it. We had some of it all.

I came back to the United States in 1946, I believe in February. I went and fought in the war, and came back, and was still a teenager. I just barely made it back as a teenager, but I wasn't 20 years old yet. In my military service I never washed a dish or pulled guard duty like most soldiers did. That's from being with the Night Raiders unit.

Well, back to where we were before. After the war I came back to Beckville. I had been raised on the farm, so I went back to farm and farmed a little. Then I started back to church.

Later in 1953 I went into the ministry. I've been in the ministry ever since with the Assembly of God. I've been trying to retire ever since I was 65. I'm 72 now, but who knows, it may work out.

The church is the Pine Grove Assembly Church in Beckville. It's right on the highway. It's a good church. It's where I went to be the pastor. It's been very good to me. I've also trained a lot for pastors at the church all these years. All young preachers like to be in charge. They're glad if I take a month off and go to Europe and do some evangelistic work and let them be on their own.

Then I started ailing here six or seven years ago. That's when I wanted to resign from pastoring, but I've still kept preaching. I've preached hundreds of funerals and weddings. I've taught in a lot of seminars and done revivals all over the country. I've preached in all 50 of the United States and abroad. I went right

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back where I fought and preached a missionary campaign. The strange thing about that is that it was 15 years after the war, and I couldn't recognize anything over there. My memory was excellent at that time. It's just that the area had been built up since the war. You know, have you ever gone back to a place where you were 20 years ago? You go back and see how it has changed. I was disappointed to see how it had changed, but you know that's the way things are.

I just continued to preach and minister, but I developed a chronic lung disease, emphysema. It's given me quite a bit of trouble. I'm an outpatient now over at Shreveport. When it doesn't bother me, I'm fit, strong. I can't get any sympathy, for I always look good. You'd think I was as healthy as an ox. I don't know how long this is going to last. You'll never get rid of it. You can control it pretty well most of the time.

I'm still at Pine Grove Assembly Church. I still would love to retire from pastoring, and I just don't know how it will work out. I would just quit, but I'd feel like a deserter. I wouldn't want to feel like that. I think some of the folks would like me to quit, but more of them would like me to stay. So that's where I'm hung at. I

haven't seen a show of hands on that.

All the kids think I'm their granddaddy, you know. I married their mommy and daddy. I married them and baptized all their children. I'm marrying a third generation now. I've really had a good life. I have a wife who's been with me all the way. I have four sons, one daughter, and 14 grandchildren. Yea, life's been good to me.

I had good monetary success. It's just been real good to me. I wore out 24 automobiles. I got them all new and drove them two years each. They weren't wore out, but they had over 100,000 miles on them. These cars now run for 300,000 miles if you take care of them. But I was traveling widely, and doing a lot of traveling from coast to coast. I just had to have a dependable automobile. So I would trade every two years. I was able to do it financially, and I liked to do it. I still do.

I had a farm out in the mining area. I' m also a direct descendent of Daniel Martin whose name is on Martin's Creek and Martin's Plant. He was the first settler in there. He was my great-great-granddaddy, so our roots go deep in Panola County. We've been here many generations. My granddaddy died before I was born. He had a large family. My dad had four brothers and five sisters. Twins were not a rare

event, but there haven't been any recently.

That's all I know to do, is to keep driving at what's in front of me. People have always commended me on my war record. I said, "Hey, I didn't do anything if anybody got in my way. If they didn't have on the right kind of uniform, I moved them over. That's just the way you do."

I think that "Saving Private Ryan" is the most authentic war film I've ever seen. You know the fellow who claims he was the first one wounded, he really liked it also. The D-Day scenes were more realistic than anything I've ever seen. Some of it was actual footage taken on D-Day.

On the 50th anniversary of D-Day, I was interviewed by CBS. You might have seen me, but didn't know who I was. They ran it over this part of East Texas because I was an East Texas man. The guy that interviewed me said, "You sure have a vivid memory of this." I said "Well, its been 50 years ago. You can't lose 180 really, bosom friends in just two hours. You're never going to forget it." My mind isn't near as sharp as it was a few years ago. I committed all that stuff to memory that we would have to do to get into France and out. You couldn't write everything down. I could commit it to memory

easily then, but I'd have a hard time doing that now. I don't have to worry about me doing that now because I'd have a hard time getting to where you do it. They knew what they were doing when they put us young guys up front.

The experiences of World War II and of what I went through will never leave me. I'm still restless at night and nervous. I think it goes back to being in combat when we tore up all patterns of sleep over a long period of time. You stayed awake day and night, and stayed out in the weather continually. When I did this, I just messed up my program of sleep and never got it back. Once in awhile I'll have a flash back in my sleep. I'll be back there and it's real. It's just like it was. My wife can calm me down. I don't do that often, but it was just a month ago when it last happened. It just never leaves you. I still think about the combat experiences. That's part of me.

Crossing the English Channal, Jack Harris, upper left corner.

The Distinguished Service Cross

JACK HARRIS AND DECORATIONS- DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS, UPPER LEFT CONER

Now let me tell you how I won the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC). It was I believe in August, 1944 and we broke out of St. Lo in France. I was on another mission and came up on the Free French who were in a fight with the Germans. I came around a hedgerow and there they were. It was a regimental command post. There was a set of officers and two enlisted men. They had a map spread out on the ground. They were planning out their tactics to hit the Free French group.

They didn't see me, so I just got back behind that hedgerow and tried to think what I was going to do about the mission that I was on. We were sent to harass the enemy. If we

accomplished the mission we had to get back the best way we could. I thought about harassing the enemy. I said to myself, "I believe I'll harass these guys." I had a Thompson submachine gun. It's a little short gun, and it has a clip in it with 30 to 50 cartridges. Mine had 30 rounds.

They had these two enlisted men. There was one posted on the left and another on the other side as guards. I quickly surveyed the situation, saw what was there. I said to myself, "Hey, I can take all of these people out before they even know I'm here." So I slipped around. I decided that was what I was going to. So I stepped around in the opening. I took the guard on the left out first. Then I came across these seven officers. I cut them down just like that. By now the guard to my far right, well he'd had time to unshoulder his weapon. So he fired a shot at me, but he missed. I didn't miss. One was a full colonel, one a lieutenant colonel, a major and four captains. The two enlisted men were sergeants.

The Free French Army unit was right down there waiting. They heard all the calamity and sent a little patrol unit up there to see what happened. I saw them and got with them. They took me back with them to their company commander, and I told them what happened.

He replied, "We ought to hit the Germans now that they have no leader." He asked me if I'd lead them. I said, "No, that's against military policy, but I'll go with you and stay by your side. I'll just tell you what I'd do. I'll just stand with you and help you shoot them." That's how I won the Croix de Guerre from France about the same time I was awarded the D.S.C. by our Army.

A Silver Star

There was a man over in Beckville that was a blacksmith. His name was Beason. He made for me, and another fellow from Beckville who was a paratrooper, a knife each. Then he mailed them to us. They were really classic. The other guy got killed right away, so I don't know what happened to his knife. He was over in the Pacific. I broke mine in a struggle fighting with a German in a machine gun nest.

We were in a terrible fix in that we were just about out of ammunition. This machine gun had us nailed down. The action took place outside Brest. We were in hedgerow country. I looked over one of the hedgerows where the earth mound was about four feet high. I could hear a German machine gun set even with me, and knew what it was.

I had a hand grenade with me. It was the last defense I had except the knife as I was out of ammunition myself. I lobbed the grenade over the hedgerow, and it exploded. I heard some hollering, so I jumped over into the nest. They were in there. The grenade hadn't killed them but had addled them pretty good. There were three of them. One of them bear hugged me pretty good. When he did, I already had the knife in my hand. I reached around and

put the blade in between his shoulder blades up to the hilt. It had about a six or seven inch blade.

I tried to pull the knife because another of the Germans was getting up. He was very close. I didn't have much time to try to recover my knife. The German was a big guy and twisted as he fell. And I held on to the handle. He broke the blade off almost at the hilt. The second fellow was up on his "all fours", so I kicked him as hard as I could on the chin with my big size 13 boot. There was a "pop" and I figured it was his neck. The third took off and I ran after him. He ran into a hole, a cellar, and I didn't want to go in after alone, so he got away.

That enabled the company to move to a more secure position while we were almost out of ammunition. Then we were in a better place to resupply on ammunition. That was the action for which I received one of my Silver Stars.

The Sergeant and the General

On D-Day our unit suffered 82% casualties. We had 39 men left out of 220 when the landing started. General Bradley talked to me about our unit. He commended us highly and told me we did really well. He said, "When we planned on a sand table exercise before the actual invasion, we expected at least 95% casualties."

I got to know him personally. I had done him some favors, and he had done me some favors. It was unusual for a sergeant and a general to know each other. I carried some important cargo from France to his wife. I carried it from him as I was going back to London where his wife was. I believe I made three trips carrying something to her. I didn't know what it was. It was a package, sealed really good. It was waterproof and all. My instructions from him were, "Don't let this out of your hands until you put it in the hands of my wife."

This was before and after D-Day too. I carried one package before D-Day and two after. I figured it was something real important. My orders were, "Don't let them out of your hands." The time before D-Day was when I had

come out of France. We had made a mission into France and brought back some stuff. I didn't know what it was. He presented me a package as I was getting a flight back to England, I mean to London. He gave me a package and told me to put it in his wife's hands. He said, "She'll meet you. She knows what you look like. She will identify herself." She did and I did when we met.

A sergeant and a general are usually not bosom buddies. He knew me in a crowd, and I sure knew him in a crowd. He trusted me. I first met him in England when I was going through the 13 months training. The first time I met him to shake hands with him was in a class and he asked, "Are there any Texans here?" I said, "I am." He told me, "I'd like to see you after class." He then got me an assignment or two after our first meeting.

I went into France three times before the invasion. He was the regular leader of that, so I came to personally know him from that. There were times when he'd be back in London and I'd come by. He'd take me for coffee. During those forays he'd called me Jack, but I never called him Omar. I know that he trusted me, and I know I wouldn't have betrayed that trust. I would have defended it with my life. I think that he knew that.

His wife was there during the training period before the invasion. After we got to France, he could go back and forth. He was an army commander. He was over a certain number of divisions. He came out with five stars. The first time I saw him, he just had two. I always called him "a soldier's general." He'd come up through the ranks. He was a lanky tall fellow who looked like a commander. Our relationship was not a buddy thing, but I feel he knew me personally.

He made me the company commander after the one we had was killed. That was about three days before the invasion. The captain was killed in an accident when he got caught between two trucks. So I was the company commander at D-Day, on June 6. Then July 12 when I was wounded and was sent back to the hospital, I resigned the commission. I went back to being First Sergeant. I liked to get right in the thick of it. The company commander usually stays back at the command post. I wanted to be where the action was. It was General Bradley who gave me the commission though. He called me and asked if I'd do it. I replied I'd do whatever he wanted. I told him I'd give it my best shot. I'd be leading them anyhow as First Sergeant.

I resigned my commission so I could go

back to my original company. If I didn't resign the commission I'd have to take another company. I 'd had no experience as a company commander, but I'd had a lot of experience as first sergeant.

AMY OWENS, JACK HARRIS, AND KATY VAUGHN

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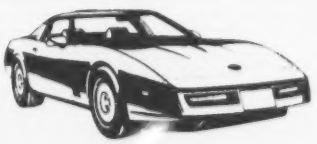

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